

**CLAIMS:**

1. A method for screening a chemical compound for its potential as a sedative or anxiolytica, which method comprises the following steps:
  - 5 a) exposing the compound to a test system; and
  - b) measuring the effect of the compound on the activity of the HPA axis.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the chemical compound is a GABA<sub>A</sub> receptor modulator.
- 10 3. The method according to claims 1 or 2, wherein the test system is a test animal, such as a mouse or a rat, and the compound is exposed to the test animal by administration.
- 15 4. The method according to claim 3, wherein the measurement of the activity of the HPA axis is performed by measuring, in a blood sample from the test animal after administration, the level of plasma corticosterone and/or ACTH.
5. The method according to any one of claims 1-4, comprising the further step:
  - 20 c1) selecting the compound as a sedative drug candidate if the compound substantially stimulates the HPA axis.
6. The method according to any one of claims 1-4, comprising the further step:
  - 25 c2) selecting the compound as an anxiolytica drug candidate if the compound has substantially no effect on the HPA axis.
7. A drug development method, which comprises the identification of a compound by the method according to any one of the claims 1-6.
- 30 8. The use of a compound identified as a sedative drug candidate by the method according to any one of the claims 1-5 or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof for the manufacture of a medicament for inducing anaesthesia, pre-anaesthesia, muscle relaxation, or sedation, or for treatment, prevention or alleviation of fever cramps or status epilepticus in a subject.
- 35 9. The use of a compound identified as an anxiolytic drug candidate by the method according to any one of the claims 1-4 and 6 or a pharmaceutically acceptable

salt thereof for the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment, prevention or alleviation of anxiety.

10. A method for the treatment, prevention, or alleviation of anxiety comprising  
5 administering to said subject a therapeutically effective amount of a compound identified as a antilytica by the method according to any one of the claims 1-4 and 6 or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

11. A method for inducing anaesthesia, pre-anaesthesia, muscle relaxation, or  
10 sedation, or for treatment, prevention or alleviation of fever cramps or status epilepticus anxiety comprising administering to said subject a therapeutically effective amount of a compound identified as a sedative by the method according to any one of the claims 1-5 or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.